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AUTHOR Dean, Christiana

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ABSTRACT

The Families Matter series of papers from the Harvard Family Research Project advances the concept of family-centered child care, advocating an approach to early childhood education that addresses the development of the child and family together. Grounded in family support principles, which build on family strengths and work from a community's culture and resources, family-centered child care incorporates positive attitudes about working with parents and practical activities to serve the family. Asserting that a key place to promote widespread use of family support principles and practices is through the child care training system, the papers that make up the series focus on how the child care field trains providers to include family support. This paper describes why family support is essential given current social and economic trends and stresses the need to build a bridge between child care and family support. After outlining comprehensive family support training content, the author highlights national and state family support credentialing initiatives, as well as family support training available from colleges and individual programs. Stating that the goal of family support training is not to create a specialized type of worker within child care programs but to train and support child care providers to work supportively with families and collaborate with community agencies, the paper then underscores the need for public-access family support training curricula that can be adapted to audiences of child care providers. Contains 52 references. (EV)

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FAMILIES MATTER

Credentialing Caregivers

Christiana Dean

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Christiana Dean

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CAMBRIDGE, MA
1998

HARVARD FAMILY RESEARCH PROJECT
38 Concord Avenue
Cambridge, MA 02138

TEL: 617-495-9108
FAX: 617-495-8594
EMAIL: HFRP@hugse1.harvard.edu
WWW: http://hugse1.harvard.edu/~hfrp

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HARVARD FAMILY RESEARCH PROJECT
Founded in 1983 by Dr. Heather Weiss, the Harvard Family Research Project (HFRP) is today at the center of a national movement to strengthen and support American families. HFRP's pathbreaking research provides practitioners, researchers, and policymakers with timely, insightful information about effective family support initiatives.

Disseminating its research widely, HFRP links people, programs, ideas, and resources together to create innovative family support programs and services and family-sustaining policies. HFRP's research helps states create systems to monitor and assess programs and services, and helps communities better integrate family support services in neighborhood programs. Using HFRP data, schools are learning more about the specific benefits of parent involvement and the best strategies for successfully engaging the entire family. HFRP's research findings are enabling practitioners to design culturally appropriate programs, and helping training and education programs effectively prepare teachers to work with families.

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PREFACE

The Families Matter series of papers advances the concept of family-centered child care, advocating an approach to early childhood education that addresses the development of the child and family together. Grounded in family support principles which build on family strengths and work from a community's culture and resources, family-centered child care incorporates positive attitudes about working with parents and practical activities to serve the family.

A key place to promote widespread use of family support principles and practices is through the child care training system. This system reaches many types of providers and greatly influences their attitudes and practices. In addition, training sets professional norms and standards — and could guide the child care field to emphasize family support in the definition of quality child care.

The papers that make up the series focus on how the child care field trains providers to include family support. The papers present both a systemic view of child care training as well as hands-on experiences in training child care providers and delivering family-supportive child care. An accompanying Resource Guide for Family-Centered Child Care offers an annotated bibliography of training materials that child care providers and trainers can use to improve their efforts to support families.

While they write from distinct perspectives, each author in this series endorses the need for integrating family support and child care training. The authors concede that there are structural and other challenges to training child care providers to deliver family support, yet they share a wealth of insights on how to accomplish change.

Each paper includes a description of how family support fits into the child care arena and suggests specific content for family support training. Acknowledging that it can be difficult to integrate family support practices into child care settings, each paper discusses the major challenges to establishing family-supportive child care programs and provides strategies and action steps to make family support part of child care training and delivery. More specifically, Families Matter covers the following topics:

- An outline of the structure of the child care delivery and training systems and an analysis of the problems posed by fragmentation on quality standards, career development, and incorporating a family support approach.
- A summary of family support training and credentialing initiatives, as well as alternative training models to address the fragmented training system characteristic of both the child care and family support fields.
- A description of training provided by a program that focuses on the "hard issues" in the parent-provider relationship and ways to overcome barriers to parent participation.
- A "how to" guide on preparing providers to work with families that are culturally, linguistically, and economically diverse and strategies to promote family involvement in the child care program.

HFRP believes that an improved child care training system that integrates family support principles and advances a logical, progressive path for professional development will lead to higher quality front-line practice. If the barriers to integrating family support and child care can be overcome, we will have a substantially stronger system of early childhood services that is better able to enhance the development of children by including their families in the learning process.

Credentialing Caregivers

The paper describes why family support is essential given current social and economic trends and stresses the need to bridge child care and family support. After outlining comprehensive family support training content, the author highlights national and state family support credentialing initiatives, as well as family support training available from colleges and individual programs. Stating that the goal of family support training is not to create a specialized type of worker within child care programs but to train and support child care providers to work supportively with families and collaborate with community agencies, the author then underscores the need for public-access family support training curricula that can be adapted to audiences of child care providers.

This study was a collaborative effort. HFRP is grateful to Kate Wrean for her editing of the reports in this series. The following HFRP staff members provided much-appreciated help with the production of this report: Atissa Banuazizi, Sybilla Dorros, Ann Hannum, Holly Kreider, Phuong Le, M. Elena Lopez, Maura Pelham, and Scott Wilder.

Heather B. Weiss
Director
Harvard Family Research Project

About the author

CHRISTIANA DEAN

Christiana Dean has been a faculty member in Cornell University's Department of Human Development since 1981, where she specializes in family policy and training front-line workers to use methods based on family support principles. She formerly directed a child care center and a family support center, both located in New York. She is a mother who relies on quality child care as a vital form of support to her own family.

BRIDGING CHILD CARE AND FAMILY SUPPORT

For more than a decade, policymakers and researchers have been examining the ability of child care programs to serve as a cornerstone of family support (Cochran, 1991; Powell, 1987; Zigler & Turner, 1982). Recently, as effective practices within the field of family support have been precisely described (Family Resource Coalition, 1996; Dunst, 1995; Kagan & Weissbourd, 1994) and child care is identified as a crucial element of welfare reform as well as early intervention with troubled families (Bryant & Maxwell, 1996), efforts to link child care, family support, and family services have gained momentum (Hershfield, 1995; Larner, 1995 a & b; Galinsky & Weissbourd, 1992). Since child care is so widely used in the United States, it makes sense to look at child care as the foundation for a broader-based family support system.

FAMILY SUPPORT PROGRAMS

A growing national recognition of the challenges facing families and communities in the United States has resulted in numerous initiatives to support them and intervene early enough to prevent serious problems. While problems such as race or gender inequality are rooted in past, incompletely resolved issues, others such as homelessness and substance abuse reflect a newer set of circumstances. All these serious issues have the potential to affect multiple generations of a family.

Many of the solutions recommended by policymakers and attempted by federal and state governments include child care as an essential family support (Carnegie Task Force on Meeting the Needs of Young Children, 1995; Schoor, 1989). For most families with young children, quality, affordable child care is foremost among the many supports they need. In addition to enabling parents to earn a living, reliable, sound child care offers many other benefits. For example, research documents the impact of quality early childhood education programs in reducing some of the harmful effects of poverty (Center for the Future of Children, 1995).

Many families, however, require support beyond child care. While each family has its unique set of needs, at least some families in most communities (and many families in some communities) need

the following supports: parenting education, job training, nutrition education, literacy classes, budgeting help, safe and affordable housing, health care, counseling services, advocacy, crisis intervention, early intervention with children's learning problems, and supportive contacts with other families.

Over the past 25 years a grassroots family support movement has gained momentum, evolving from a loose-knit assembly of neighborhood-based programs into an influential national force (Dunst, 1995; Epstein, Larner & Halpern, 1995; Goetz & Peck, 1994). While reflecting the diverse communities and families that they serve, family support programs share these common features (Family Resource Coalition, 1996):

- Staff and families work together in relationships based on equality and respect.
- Staff enhances families' capacity to support the growth and development of all family members — adults, youth, and children.
- Families are resources to their own members, to other families, to programs, and to communities.
- Programs affirm and strengthen families' cultural, racial, and linguistic identities and enhance their ability to function in a multicultural society.
- Programs are embedded in their communities and contribute to the community-building process.
- Programs advocate with families for services and systems that are fair, responsive, and accountable to the families served.
- Practitioners work with families to mobilize formal and informal resources to support family development.
- Programs are flexible and continually responsive to emerging family and community issues.
- Principles of family support are modeled in all program activities, including planning, governance, and administration.

Two underlying goals guide family support programs: to help families identify and build on their own strengths, and to work with their communities to provide necessary services in ways that respect families as the primary decision makers about their own lives. Although an individual family member may initiate a request for help, family support programs view the family as a whole, recognizing that changes in one family member affect the

others. And, since family support is an approach, not a particular type of service, it can be infused into any service for families (Dean, 1996).

This paper summarizes some of the societal trends and statistics signaling the need for family support and for child care teachers to be trained in family support. After outlining the specific skills that child care teachers require to support families and briefly discussing the national trend toward credentialing, the paper describes current family support training initiatives, most of which could be adapted to an audience of child care teachers. The paper concludes by acknowledging the challenges that must be overcome if child care teachers are to deliver family support and provides a set of recommendations aimed at making family support training and experience easier for child care teachers to obtain.

INFLUENCE OF SOCIETAL TRENDS AND NATIONAL WELFARE REFORM

Families in the United States need support in order to raise healthy children, and child care is a crucial support for most families. Child care is equally necessary to teenage mothers climbing out of welfare dependency, the working poor struggling to make ends meet, and middle class dual-career families. Several socioeconomic trends and ongoing efforts at welfare reform have escalated the need for both quality child care programs and accessible family support services:

Growing number of families living in poverty: Over 14.6 million children — nearly 22 percent of all children in the United States — live in poverty (U.S. Census Bureau, 1993). Millions of additional families live in the grey area slightly above the Census Bureau's poverty rate ($14,343 for a family of four, $11,187 for a family of three) (Zill & Nord, 1994) — too "rich" to qualify for many types of assistance, yet still struggling to meet their basic needs. Even with a full-time worker in the family, many families strain to make ends meet. Between 1983 and 1992, the median weekly earnings of full-time workers (adjusted for inflation) increased only one percent (Zill & Nord, 1994).

Rising rates of employed mothers (particularly of very young children) within two-earner families: Two-parent families tend to try to cope financially by having both parents in the work force. More than two-thirds of all children of two-parent families in the United States have both parents in the work force (Zill & Nord, 1994).

Increasing number of single-parent families: Providing for their families is even more difficult for single parents. In 1991, 30 percent of all new babies — 1.2 million babies — were born to unmarried mothers (Zill & Nord, 1994). Even when parents are married, the chances of divorce are high; more than 1.5 million children each year experience the emotional and economic turmoil of their parents divorcing (Zill & Nord, 1994).

Growing levels of domestic and community violence: Violence pervades the lives of millions of families in the United States who either experience it directly in their homes, neighborhoods, and schools or are exposed to it through relentless images on television and in movies. Not surprisingly, many families live in fear of violence. Between two and four million women are abused in the United States each year (American Medical Association, 1992). In 1993, 1,018,692 incidents of child abuse or neglect were substantiated nationwide (Bronfenbrenner Life Course Center, 1995). While economic strains and the struggle to raise healthy children without a partner tinge the daily lives of increasing numbers of families, problems within communities magnify families' internal difficulties. The increase in children and teenagers carrying guns and joining gangs reflects their growing sense of vulnerability at school and in neighborhoods (Garbarino, 1995).

Increasing number of families for whom English is a second language: Large numbers of recent immigrants have led to an increase in families who do not speak English well. For example, in California, 15 percent of the population speaks English poorly enough to be in need of language training; in Texas and New York state, that figure is 10 percent. Certain cities have even higher percentages — 20 percent of the population of New York City has limited English proficiency (Zimmerman, 1994). Communication between child care teachers and families is complicated by language barriers. Parents may misunderstand the teachers or be unable to express themselves, while children who do not speak English well require specialized teaching that child care teachers often lack the time and skill to provide.

Federal changes in welfare legislation: Current welfare legislation has replaced Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) with Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), which requires recipients to work in order to receive government funds. One form of allowable work is providing child care to other children whose parents receive TANF dollars. This welfare modification has a two-pronged effect. One, it is increasing the number of high-risk families seeking child care. Two, it is bringing an influx of workers who are not trained in child care or family support into the child care field. Moreover, these new caregivers are likely themselves to need multiple supports.

Each of these societal trends and changes has an impact on the content of child care training and provides strong arguments for making child care the focal point of a range of family support services.

FAMILY SUPPORT TRAINING FOR CHILD CARE TEACHERS

The ability to work well with parents has always been part of the repertoire of skillful child care teachers. Helping parents and children handle separation from each other, ameliorating the effects of family stresses on children, and conducting effective parent conferences have long been routine skills for this field. The people who care for and teach young children have tough jobs. They are expected not only to teach and care for young children lovingly and ably amid myriad challenges, but also to work with — and support — families they might not understand or like.

Recent changes in families and society, however, have left even well-trained early childhood educators feeling unprepared for the radically different set of demands brought by today's children and their families. These changes have intersected to create a growing need for teachers who are knowledgeable about family needs as well as children. Today's child care teachers must be able to:

- Offer children affection and stability
- Plan and lead developmentally and culturally appropriate programs for young children (often including babies, toddlers, and those of school age)

- Build mutually respectful partnerships with parents from diverse cultural backgrounds and family structures
- Educate parents about child development and related topics
- Recognize a wide range of developmental and emotional problems, then refer family members to the appropriate specialized services
- Work collaboratively with specialists and community/government agencies

At the same time that expectations of child care teachers have expanded, the demand for child care has mushroomed, propelling thousands of untrained or undertrained teachers into the field; the majority of people caring for young children are child care assistants at centers or mothers at home who have had little if any formal training. Moreover, teacher turnover is high, due to low pay and the broader, intrinsically more demanding job definition that links child care and family support.

Practitioners, researchers, and policymakers have responded by establishing and promoting standards for those who work with young children (Association of Teacher Educators and the National Association for the Education of Young Children, 1991; Copple, 1991; Bredekamp, 1987; Galinsky, 1986) as well as documenting the need for higher pay (Lawrence et al., 1989; Whitebook et al., 1989). While these efforts are vital to the quality and availability of child care in the United States and should be vigorously supported, they barely touch a third issue that also has a profound effect on the quality of child care: the ability of child care teachers to support families.

FAMILY SUPPORT TRAINING CONTENT FOR CHILD CARE TEACHERS

The most supportive service that child care teachers can offer families is developmentally appropriate care and education for young children. The competencies needed to deliver such care have been thoroughly developed (and continue to be refined) within the field of early childhood education, so are not discussed further here. Instead this paper emphasizes the need for child care teachers to extend their focus and abilities beyond the children in their care and to work skillfully and respectfully with the children's families.

The first goal of training child care teachers to support families must be to help them develop empathy with the parents whose children are under their care. This requires understanding the ways in which national and state policies (or the lack of policies) affect their communication and relationships with families. For example, if a parent is chronically late in picking up a child at the end of the day, it is more likely a reflection of workplace hours and inflexible scheduling policies than a personal affront to the caregiver. Likewise, a mother who must return to work after a short maternity leave due to inadequate parental leave policies may feel a host of contradictory emotions, including uncertainty about her role and jealousy of a caregiver.

The next goal is to develop the specific skills that child care teachers need in order to understand and support families. Specific competencies include being able to:

Family support and parent education

- Understand how family support helps children
- Understand family systems
- Provide accurate information on child development, developmentally appropriate activities, discipline, and guidance
- Help families identify and build on their own strengths

Communication

- Develop and express empathy
- Listen skillfully
- Understand non-verbal communication
- Model "saying what you mean" clearly and respectfully
- Handle giving and receiving criticism constructively
- Develop skills to work well with families with language barriers or low literacy
- Confront parents with a problem-solving approach when necessary, confident in their own knowledge and ability to bring up sensitive topics

Building and maintaining mutually respectful relationships with families

- Treat families courteously
- Build trust
- Help families restore and maintain an identity as their child's most important teacher
- Share power with families
- Make respectful and effective home visits, establishing a rapport with the family and achieving specific skill-teaching objectives
- Know how and when to end a relationship with a family, if necessary

Assessment and goal setting

- Assist families in articulating their concerns about their children
- Help families arrange for and understand specialized assessment when needed
- Help families set and reach goals
- Respect families' confidentiality and independence

Helping families access specialized services

- Recognize developmental disabilities, domestic violence, chemical dependency, sexual abuse, child abuse, and common mental health problems
- Help families access specialized services and support them as they use these services
- Understand legal and moral responsibilities in reporting child abuse

Competence with diversity

- Show respect for a variety of family forms
- Show respect for cultures different from their own

Collaboration

- Collaborate effectively with families, co-workers, and other agencies and schools
- Promote effective team work

Community building

- Help families identify and strengthen their informal helping networks
- Link families informally with other families having similar interests and concerns
- Facilitate group meetings
- Work with advisory groups
- Handle difficult behaviors in a group using negotiation and facilitation skills

Child care teacher self-empowerment

- Plan their own time well
- Ask for help from supervisors, co-workers, and their own family members
- Manage stress
- Balance work and family life
- Establish their own support system
- Live sanely with uncertain funding

The goal of family support training is not to create a specialized type of worker within already understaffed child care programs, but to train and support the mainstream of child care teachers to work supportively with families, recognize the need for referrals to specialized services, and collaborate effectively with others.

AVENUES TO FAMILY SUPPORT TRAINING AND CREDENTIALING

For child care teachers to be competent in family support as well as child care, they need training that is conceptually relevant — and that they can fit practically into their busy lives. The nation's patchwork system of child care training and credentialing varies from state to state. Training includes college course work, the national Child Development Associate (CDA) credential, and informal workshops. Likewise, family support training is an assortment of college courses, credentialing programs, and non-credit courses and workshops. Because the field of family support is newer than that of early education and care and is therefore less institutionalized, workshops and informal inservice training predominate over the few college courses and credentialing programs available.

Policymakers and practitioners nationwide are recognizing the need for quality, sequential, assessable training for family support providers. Some of the training and credentialing programs for providers currently being used or developed by national organizations and states have implications for preparing child care teachers to deliver family support. Several current family support training initiatives have much to offer child care teachers, but need to be adapted to make them more relevant and accessible to them.

Trend toward National Credentialing

Interest in credentialing or certification of direct human service providers is growing rapidly nationwide, propelled in part by the advent of "managed care" (Community Support Skills Standards Project, 1996). Organizations seeking contracts as managed care providers welcome the perceived benefits of a nationally recognized credential specific to their field (health, child care, human services). Credentialing, with its widely agreed-upon body of knowledge and systematic assessment process for verifying the competence of providers, assures funders of managed care services that an agency's providers are qualified to provide the care that they are contracted to deliver. Child care teachers may soon find credentialing to be essential to continued employment, as their employers hire staff with an eye toward meeting requirements from third party funders.

Some child care workers are wary of credentialing. They may fear losing their jobs or future promotions unless they obtain a credential. Others resist the movement toward credentialing because they entered their work as part of a grassroots movement and resent increased regulation of their work (e.g., some home-based caregivers and providers in neighborhood family support programs). On the other hand, many welcome the advent of credentialing, particularly when it is designed in ways they can readily access. Distance learning, self-study, widely available classes, tuition reimbursement from employers or state or federal governments, and articulation agreements between colleges and credentialing bodies all help providers obtain credentials.[1]

1. Articulation agreements enable students to transfer credit from one academic institution to another.

National Initiatives

Head Start: The National Head Start Bureau is considering a national credentialing program for Head Start family services workers in response to the 1994 Head Start reauthorization legislation that specifically called for improvements in the quality of staff development for this category of Head Start employee. Several catalysts stimulated this initiative, including documentation of the increasing number of multi-problem and at-risk families in Head Start.

The Head Start Bureau hired a private research firm to examine the current qualifications of Head Start family service staff; identify current competency-based training programs used by Head Start, as well as similar training programs for paraprofessional staff in other human service agencies; convene a panel of experts to list the competencies and skills needed by entry-level Head Start family service staff; and recommend a strategy to develop a national Head Start competency-based training credential for Head Start family service staff (CSR, Inc., 1995).

Simultaneously, the Head Start Bureau contracted with several curriculum developers nationwide to develop 40 training guides for widespread national use within Head Start that cover several topics relevant to family support (for example, communicating with parents). Because Head Start is a major employer nationwide of child care teachers, these guides, even if used internally only, have the potential to reach a very large number of teachers. The Head Start Bureau has not yet announced whether it will incorporate these guides into the family service worker credentialing program.

The Family Resource Coalition STATES Initiative: A non-credential family support training program with national implications, the STATES initiative emerged from the Chicago-based Family Resource Coalitions' recognition that the burgeoning number of family support programs nationwide would benefit from quality training and technical assistance. With funding from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the Coalition launched its STATES program in 1995 to increase the capacity of states to advance a broad-based, inclusive family support agenda. The Coalition's objective is to provide training and technical assistance to the eight states involved in the STATES initiative, helping

participants develop family support training for statewide dissemination and identify and act upon family support policy agendas.

State Initiatives

New York State Family Development Credential: Although the New York State Family Development Training and Credentialing program primarily targets front-line family workers within the state, it is particularly noteworthy because of its unique public-access approach to the use of its materials, which enables other states, federal programs, and local family support programs to incorporate it (within certain broad copyright guidelines) into their ongoing training. The content is relevant and readily adaptable to child care teachers nationwide.

In 1991, a group of 15 New York state agencies came together as the Commissioners Interagency Work Group on Family Support and Empowerment to launch a major interagency effort known as the Family Development Training and Credentialing (FDC) initiative to train and credential front-line family workers in family support skills. They regarded the FDC as the cornerstone of New York's attempt to reorient its family service systems away from fragmented, problem-specific, crisis-driven services and interventions toward a more effective system that helps families develop their capacity to solve problems and achieve long-lasting positive change.

The Department of State's Community Services Block Grant program funded a contract with the Empowering Families Project at Cornell University to help develop the FDC. Cornell conducted focus groups made up of family support providers, supervisors, and family members. These individuals helped the Empowering Families Project develop a list of family support competencies and provided input into the design of the training and credentialing system.

In addition to incorporating insights from the focus groups, the FDC training curriculum is built on two decades of research on family support and empowerment. Called Empowerment Skills for Family Workers, the curriculum includes a Handbook for Family Workers (e.g., home visitors, case managers, community health workers, child care teachers, and teacher aides) (Dean, 1996), a Skills Practice and Portfolio Development Guide

(Lawrence, Dull, and Dean, 1996), and an accompanying Trainer's Manual (Crane and Dean, 1996) that helps college instructors and state and local agency trainers offer appropriate courses to prepare caregivers for the FDC assessment. Providers seeking the FDC may enroll in the comprehensive Empowerment Skills for Family Workers curriculum or a comparable combination of "building blocks" training from other programs to develop some of the FDC-required competencies. Cornell has put together a matrix for analyzing FDC-appropriate training building blocks. FDC applicants must take 110 hours of classroom training based on the Empowerment Skills for Family Workers or comparable building blocks; submit a portfolio demonstrating understanding and application of the family support competencies; undergo a period of mentoring with a qualified field advisor (this usually coincides with classroom time and preparation of their portfolio); and pass the FDC exam.

The first FDC training institute for instructors, field advisors, and assessors took place in July 1996. In the fall of 1997, most of the 300 family support workers completing the training program at 20 sites throughout the state are expected to receive their FDC credential (Crane, 1995). Additional Trainers Institutes will take place in June 1997 and January 1998. The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation recently awarded Cornell University funding enabling the New York State FDC system to establish an FDC training program in every county of the state and borough of New York City by the year 2000.

The New York State Comprehensive Early Childhood Career Development Initiative (CDI): Several efforts are underway nationally and in various states to develop systems of child care teacher training which include articulation agreements among and between colleges. The New York State Comprehensive Early Childhood Career Development Initiative (CDI) is an example of such a statewide effort (New York State Career Development Initiative, 1997).

In order to facilitate articulation agreements among training institutions and to help government agencies develop regulatory guidelines for early childhood programs, CDI is defining a core body of knowledge needed by early childhood teachers at three levels: entry-level; a level for individuals who have participated in

formal study leading to a degree and/or certificate and have refined their knowledge through guided and reflective experience with children and young families; and advanced leadership. CDI designers also are examining the feasibility of credentialing efforts aimed specifically at early childhood program directors.

While this state initiative is invaluable in building consensus on the areas of expertise needed by early childhood teachers (whether trained in college or on the job), it deserves mention here because it could be expanded to articulate with family support training initiatives (such as the New York State Family Development Credential).

Iowa Family Development Specialist Training and Credential: The University of Iowa School of Social Work offers an eight-day Family Development Specialist training and certification program for professional and paraprofessional family support workers through its National Resource Center for Family Centered Practice. The course includes basic social work topics such as family systems theory; interviewing and family assessment; relationship building; goal setting and planning; community services coordination; identification of and response to family violence, chemical dependency, and depression; personal empowerment strategies; community development and advocacy; and professional development. The Resource Center had certified over 500 family support workers since 1988.

In addition to offering a two-day refresher course, the Family Development Specialist program encourages supervisors to take two to three days of training designed to teach them how to guide family development workers effectively, as well as enhance their own professional growth. Through the training and certification process, the School of Social Work sets forth a detailed code of ethics governing the actions of both front-line Family Development Specialists and those in supervisory roles (National Resource Center for Family Centered Practice, n.d.).

Iowa recognizes that to achieve widespread training and credentialing of family support workers statewide, it needs the help of independent training providers in addition to trainers in the University's National Resource Center for Family Centered Practice. In 1995 the Iowa Family Development and Self-Sufficiency

(FaDSS) Council announced a process through which training contractors could secure approval of their curricula for preparing providers for the Iowa Family Development Specialist credential (Iowa Department of Human Services, 1995). Approved curricula meet a specific set of standards (including adherence to the code of ethics) and address family-centered competencies.

The major limitation of the Iowa Family Development Specialist program as a prototype for training child care teachers in family support practices is its dependence on a social work (rather than a family support) model. Child care teachers need to know how to apply basic family support methods but do not need (or have time) to learn the detailed social work methodology underlying Iowa's approach to training family development specialists.

Other state efforts: Several other states are considering or beginning to develop family support worker training and/or credentialing programs. Some of these require candidates to meet distribution requirements using existing college courses (often from social work departments), but few offer training specifically built on family support principles and practices. One notable exception is North Carolina, which is in the process of establishing a statewide interagency family support training and credentialing initiative modeled on New York's Family Development Training and Credentialing Program. A small number of other states, including Indiana, Rhode Island, and Washington, are moving in a similar direction, working toward creating standards and training curricula specific to family support.

College Certificate Programs

Several colleges offer credit and non-credit courses in family support, parent education, and related topics. These are often designed for staff already working in child care or family support programs and are offered on weekends or as short summer courses. Examples of such programs are found at the Bank Street College of Education in New York City and at Wheelock College in Boston.

Bank Street Certificate Program: Family Support/Parent Education: In 1995 Bank Street College of Education began offering a training course to prepare staff in early childhood programs and community-based organizations to work effectively

with children and parents. The course, which takes place for three hours on 10 Fridays, leads to a college certificate (Bank Street College, 1995).

Wheelock College's Certificate Program: Parenting Studies: Wheelock College offers a credit-bearing weekend seminar series in parent education with topics such as "Strategies for Enhancing Interpersonal Communication between Parents and Teachers" and "Responding to Questions Parents Ask." These and similar courses can qualify practitioners to earn Wheelock Weekend College's certificate in parenting education. For those not desiring college credit, continuing education credits and audit (non-credit) status are available (Wheelock College, 1995).

Program-Specific Training

Much of the training available to staff in family support or intervention programs is specific to particular program models that primarily use home visiting or group meetings (not child care) to support families. Following are three examples of innovative, widely used programs which, while not exhaustive, highlight the importance placed on training for family support. Of these examples, only the Parent Services Project uses the child care setting as the center of its family support efforts.

Healthy Families America: Through intensive home visiting services, Healthy Families America identifies and supports parents of newborns who are at risk for child maltreatment and other poor outcomes. Staff training includes one week of core training plus job-specific training for home visitors, family needs assessment workers, supervisors, and trainers (Rich and Dean, 1995).

Minnesota Early Learning Design (MELD): To fulfill its mission to strengthen families as they first transition into parenthood, MELD brings together neighborhood-based groups of parents with similar parenting needs, provides them with pertinent information, and helps them develop into supportive peer groups. MELD offers three levels of training: certification training for MELD site coordinators, training for MELD group facilitators, and topic- or audience-specific training for practitioners (Rich & Dean, 1995).

Parent Services Project (PSP)[2]: PSP explicitly focuses on infusing family support practices into established child care centers. Its primary goal is to develop parent self-esteem and empowerment so parents will be able to create a happier and healthier developmental environment for their children. PSP's direct service goals are to: raise parents' sense of their own importance in rearing their children, diminish feelings of isolation, enhance parenting skills, assist parents in securing needed resources for themselves and their children, and add enjoyment to their lives through center-based family activities and special events. PSP offers training to replicate and customize the PSP philosophy and activities into existing child care, Head Start, and other programs, as well as training for trainers (Rich & Dean, 1995).

Policy and Training Institutes

Several national policy institutes are documenting the need for family support and recommending specific legislative, regulatory, and training initiatives to provide support to families. An example is a campaign recently launched by the National Center for Clinical Infant Programs called Zero-Three Heart Start. The initiative is aimed at preventing school failure through national adoption of child health care policies, parental leave, better wages for child care teachers, higher standards for infant and child care, parent education and family resource programs, training for child care and health care staff, and a universal child tax credit. The recommendations regarding child care teacher training emphasize the ability of child care teachers to deliver family support.

In summary, while each of the family support training initiatives described above (training leading to a credential, college courses, program-specific training, and policy and training institutes) has value in helping prepare child care teachers to deliver family support, the FDC can most easily form the foundation of training to instruct child care teachers how to deliver family support. The FDC is built explicitly on family support principles. It addresses all the skills associated with the competencies needed by family-supportive child care teachers. And, most importantly, it is a public-access curriculum that readily allows for adaptation and customization to the child care setting.

2. See *Families Matter: The Parent Services Project*, also in this series.

ACTION STEPS TO INTEGRATE FAMILY SUPPORT INTO THE CHILD CARE SETTING

To enhance child care with a family support approach, child care teachers must be willing to care for whole families, following family support principles. Child care teachers require ongoing opportunities to learn the skills that enable them to support children and their parents. This paper's recommendations on how to increase the penetration of a family support philosophy into the child care realm take into account the challenges described below.

Challenges to Child Care Teachers' Acceptance of Family Support Responsibilities

Consensus exists about the most formidable challenges that have the potential to act as barriers to delivering quality family support via the child care setting:

Child care teachers' negative attitude toward parents: Child care teachers, who usually enter their profession because they enjoy children, do not automatically embrace the idea that children and families are a "package deal." Through experience, some soon realize that in order be effective with children they must also understand and work with families. These teachers seek training on how to work with families or try to develop family support skills on their own.

Unfortunately, many child care teachers do not arrive easily (if ever) at this conclusion. These teachers (who are widespread within the child care field) tend to view families skeptically, regarding them as the cause of children's problems as well as the source of extra work for child care teachers. Some of these teachers find ways to insulate themselves from families, perhaps by working in a program with little or no emphasis on parent involvement. Some leave the profession disgruntled, while others stay in the profession but regard themselves as the children's rescuers and protectors — a stance antithetical to supporting families.

A respected reviewer of child care literature concluded that teachers' negative views of parents may well be the norm and that parents most in need of support from teachers may be the least likely to receive it (Kontos, 1987). A study of teacher-parent

attitudes and interactions conducted in conjunction with the National Child Care Staffing Study (Whitebook et al., 1989), found that child care teachers were more likely to rate mothers favorably when the mothers had higher incomes and better education (Galinsky, 1990), a finding that does not bode well for teachers willingly providing an array of family support services to the numerous low-income families using child care today. The same study also found that only 41 percent of teachers approved of mothers working; 24 percent "strongly disapproved." Numerous workshops for child care teachers conducted by the author (Dean, 1992) have revealed similar attitudes.

Low pay and long hours in the child care profession: Child care teachers' resentment toward parents and lack of empathy for families' troubles are often related to the low pay and long hours associated with their jobs. Despite the high cost of child care to families, child care teachers are still very poorly paid. Seventy percent of the child care work force earns an income below the poverty level. The National Child Care Staffing Study found that most staff did not receive annual raises, health insurance, or retirement benefits. Moreover, low wages and inadequate benefits contribute to a turnover rate of 41 percent per year in the child care field (Whitebook et al., 1989).

Not enough time to give family support or receive family support training: Even when child care teachers develop empathy for families, the lack of time in their busy schedules (both time to communicate with parents and time to learn about effective methods of supporting families) remains an overwhelming challenge. Time for parents and child care teachers to communicate is usually limited to a few minutes in the morning, when parents are rushing to work, and the end of the day, when patience and energy is at a low for both parents and teachers. Time for training is at a premium for child care teachers, who often work full time plus raise a family of their own; free time to attend classes and workshops is extremely scarce.

Lack of widely accessible, quality family support training materials: While there is a growing body of information for training child care teachers to care appropriately for children, resources to train child care teachers in family support skills are rare. Those that do exist are often only available through attendance at an expensive course in a distant city.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The issue of compensation relates to the first three challenges mentioned above. If child care teachers are to deliver family support, policymakers, practitioners, and parents together must remedy the low pay and long hours that engender teachers' resentment and lack of empathy. Improvements to child care teachers' pay and working conditions are vital to enlisting child care teachers to provide effective child care and family support. As long as child care teachers remain underpaid and overworked, many will feel animosity toward parents.

Those responsible for formulating, directing, and delivering child care and family support services need to contribute to filling the training content gap. Today the majority of child care workers who receive any training do not receive instruction in family support. Child care in the United States is provided in a fragmented and underfunded child care "system" of for-profit and non-profit, center-based, school-based, and home-based child care programs. Likewise, the child care training system lacks cohesion and consistent advocacy of family support. The early care and education field needs to develop a mechanism for reviewing the appropriateness of existing or new family support training materials as child care training resources, determine which skills they address, and ensure that their approach models family support principles.

The following recommendations are presented according to an individual's role in the child care field:

- *Child care teachers* should continually try to develop their skills in supporting families through courses, workshops, or self-study. It will also help if they learn about specialized services available in the community so as to refer families appropriately. Educating child care teachers about the role that national, state, and parents' workplace policy (or lack of it) plays in their working conditions is also important. Child care teachers (and parents) need to understand how they are affected by — and can affect — policies that relate to the quality of the child care experience.

- *Directors of child care programs* must provide teachers with ongoing opportunities to develop family support skills. Especially if newly adopting a family support approach, directors need to ensure that teachers are trained to identify needs for specialized services and make effective referrals. Programs also may find it helpful to develop a debriefing procedure to use when staff are faced with difficult family issues and then use the experience as a training tool.
- *National, state, and local child care councils, resource and referral agencies, professional organizations, and others in a coordinating role* should integrate family support principles and methodology into their professional development offerings. They need to develop specialized skills in family support, hiring family support personnel specifically to offer training and technical assistance in family support methodology to child care teachers and programs. It is especially important for these groups to promote family support as a vital component of quality child care.
- *Colleges and other training institutions* should offer credit-bearing courses on family support within existing curricula such as early childhood education and promote these courses to child care teachers. Building family support into requirements for a degree in early childhood education and developing articulation agreements with other colleges, universities, and credentialing programs would make it easier for child care teachers to study family support and earn degrees.
- *Policymakers* need to strengthen the family component of CDA and develop a CDA specialization in family support. In addition, encouraging Head Start to collaborate with a wide range of programs in the development and dissemination of a national Family Support Worker Training and Credential would enable it to become a valuable training path parallel to the CDA.
- *Funders* should solicit and fund the dissemination of training resources that aim to infuse family support into the child care field and evaluation of the effectiveness of this application.

Child care teachers have the potential to help strengthen the millions of families in the United States who need support for their childrearing efforts. While it is unrealistic to expect all child care teachers to become experts in family support, they can, with minimal training and support, develop empathy with parents and master the basics of family support.

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Harvard Family Research Project
38 Concord Avenue
Cambridge, MA 02138
Tel: (617) 495-9108
Fax: (617) 495-8594
E-Mail: HFRP@HUGSE1.HARVARD.EDU
WWW: http://hugse1.harvard.edu/~hfrp